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ABSTRACT

This study examined graduate satisfaction among a sample of graduates of all programs in the Abraham S. Fischler Center for the Advancement of Education at Nova Southeastern University (NSU) in Florida. A total of 255 students who graduated between 1992 and 1995, the majority of whom received doctoral or masters degrees, responded to a survey that focused on demographic and background information, educational outcomes, quality indicators, computing skills, and employment and career outcomes. The study found that over 95 percent of respondents indicated that they would recommend their program to a friend or acquaintance. Over 85 percent of respondents indicated that their current job was either highly related or moderately related to their major at NSU. Nearly 15 percent of respondents indicated that they would not have attended a college or university if they had not attended NSU. In regard to educational quality, the highest ratings were offered for clarity of written graduate admission policies and program length. Statements related to basic competence in the use of computers received among the lowest ratings. A copy of the survey questionnaire is appended. (Contains 11 references.) (MDM)

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1996

GRADUATES OF THE ABRAHAM S. FISCHLER CENTER FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF EDUCATION REFLECT ON THEIR EXPERIENCE WITH NOVA SOUTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY

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GRADUATES OF THE ABRAHAM S. FISCHLER CENTER FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF EDUCATION REFLECT ON THEIR EXPERIENCE WITH NOVA SOUTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY

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Research and Planning
Report 96-05

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study provides a common assessment of graduates from all programs in the Abraham S. Fischler Center for the Advancement of Education. Summary statistics representing respondents from all programs are provided in collapsed format in the main body of this report. Breakout statistics, differentiating between Masters/Specialist and Doctoral respondents are available on request.

This study focused on all 3853 July 1, 1992 to June 30, 1995 graduates from the Center for the Advancement of Education. To accommodate the management of survey distribution and data preparation for such a large population, it was decided to invite a random sample of members of the population for survey completion. The invited sample was based on a 25 percent *last name* alphabetical sort of the population. After adjusting for invalid mailing labels, mailing labels with an international address, and surveys returned by the United States Postal Service as undeliverable, the adjusted sample consisted of 845 potential respondents. Surveys were returned by 255 graduates, resulting in a survey response rate of 30.2 percent. Sample statistics are in general parity with known demographic population parameters and there is sufficient evidence to suggest that the responding sample is representative of the population.

There was ample evidence to conclude that graduates are, overall, very pleased with their experience with the University. Over 95 percent of all respondents indicated that they would recommend their program to a friend or acquaintance. The strong practitioner orientation of the Center (mean years of professional work experience prior to enrollment = 13.4 years) and interest in career and professional development were found throughout this study. Statements related to basic competence in the use of computers received lower ratings. Graduates offered the highest rating for skills in word processing and the lowest rating for use of the Internet.

Following an analysis of survey results, a series of recommendations was generated: (1) incorporation of accurate demographic characteristics and attention to comparative advantage into marketing literature; (2) continued emphasis of the practitioner-orientation of academic programs; and (3) the need for attention to pertinent quality indicators that received mean ratings of less than 4.0. Attention was also given to the need for further concern to the level of computing and technology infusion into the curriculum.

In addition to the tables presented in this report, an extensive series of tables, highlighting each academic program in the Center, has also been developed. Although these tables are not included this report, they are also available upon request.

HIGHLIGHTS

Demographics

Doctoral graduates

- Age at time of graduation . . . . . Median Age 45 Years
- Gender . . . . . 60 Percent Female
- Ethnicity . . . . . 80 Percent White
- South Florida residence . . . . . 9 Percent

Masters/Specialist graduates

- Age at time of graduation . . . . . Median Age 37 Years
- Gender . . . . . 85 Percent Female
- Ethnicity . . . . . 74 Percent White
- South Florida residence . . . . . 39 Percent

Reasons for Selecting the University

Doctoral graduates

- Convenience . . . . . 89 Percent
- Type of Programs Available . . . . . 74 Percent
- Location . . . . . 50 Percent

Masters/Specialist graduates

- Convenience . . . . . 89 Percent
- Type of Programs Available . . . . . 60 Percent
- Location . . . . . 59 Percent

Satisfaction With the University

- Statements related to satisfaction with the University's involvement in professional development and career preparation received high overall ratings.

- Over 85 percent of all survey respondents indicated that their current job was either highly related or moderately related to their major at the University.

- Over 95 percent of all survey respondents indicated that they would recommend their program to a friend or acquaintance.

Basic Skills in the Use of Computers

- Overall, graduates indicated that they have moderate skills in the basic use of computers.

- Graduates offered the highest rating for skills in word processing; the lowest self-rating for use of the Internet.

Career Patterns

Doctoral graduates

- Approximately 60 percent of all doctoral graduates earned $50,000 in annual salary from their primary employer.

- Doctoral graduates had 18 years of professional work experience before enrolling at NSU.

Masters/Specialist graduates

- Approximately 85 percent of all masters/specialist graduates earned less than $50,000 in annual salary from their primary employer.

- Masters/Specialist graduates had 10 years of professional work experience before enrolling at NSU.

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INTRODUCTION

Background

When originally chartered in 1964, Nova Southeastern University followed a mission that was focused on advanced technology. Although courses related to education were found in Behavioral Science, specific programs in education were not offered at the University until 1972.

In 1972, in reaction to a changing mission, the University offered two external degree programs for educational practitioners throughout Florida and other states:

- The Ed.D. Program in Educational Leadership was offered to practitioners in K-12 administration.
- The Ed.D. Program for Community College Faculty and Administrators was offered to community college practitioners.

These distance education programs were organized as clusters, with instruction offered throughout Florida and other states to groups of approximately 30 students attending class at monthly sessions.

These two distance education programs were immediately well received by their respective markets, and they both provided a major contribution to the University's rapid growth in the 1970s. The continued growth of program offerings resulted, in 1980, in the organization of all graduate education programs at the University into the Center for the Advancement of Education (*Nova Southeastern University Fact Book*, 1996). Now known as the Abraham S. Fischler Center for the Advancement of Education, the Center offers field-based degree programs at the master's, specialist, and doctoral levels in the following areas:

- National Ed.D. Program for Educational Leaders
- Ed.D. Programs for Higher Education
- Ed.D. Programs in Child and Youth Studies
- M.S. and Ed.D. Programs in Instructional Technology and Distance Education
- M.S. and Ed.S. Graduate Teacher Education Program

- Master's Program in Speech-Language Pathology
- Master's Program in Life Span Care and Administration

The Center for the Advancement of Education offers field-based programs throughout Florida, 18 other states, and Canada (*Nova Southeastern University Office of Licensure and State Relations Off-Campus Program Directory*, 1995). The Center served over 6,600 students (unduplicated cumulative headcount enrollment) during Calendar Year 1994 (*Enrollment Trends and Characteristics of Nova Southeastern University Students: Calendar Year 1990 to 1994*).

Purpose of this Study

This study was conducted to provide a common assessment of graduates from all programs associated with the University's Center for the Advancement of Education. Statistics are presented in this report in collapsed format, representing all respondents. Breakout statistics with focus on master's/specialist respondents and doctoral respondents have also been prepared in a series of tables. Tables which focus on the programs identified in the survey have additionally been prepared.

This study was also conducted to provide an assessment of distance learning, since the Center offers instruction nearly exclusively through the use of various distance education modalities. Accordingly, an additional purpose of this study was to examine the satisfaction of graduates with their experience at the University, recognizing that for nearly all graduates in the Center for the Advancement of Education, this experience was based on distance education.

METHODOLOGY

Survey Development

To provide a common assessment of graduates in the major academic centers at the University, the survey instrument associated with this report was developed, in part, from the survey instrument used in a recent assessment of undergraduate programs at the University (*Graduates of Nova Southeastern University's Undergraduate Programs Tell Us What They Think About Their University Experience, 1996*). One key area of difference between the surveys, however, was the inclusion of QUALITY INDICATORS in the survey administered to graduates from the Center for the Advancement of Education. Statements associated with quality indicators are directly linked to accreditation criteria established by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. It was decided to include these quality indicators so

that the University would be able to provide precise information about specific statements found in *Criteria for Accreditation* (1996).

Sampling

The population consisted of all 3853 July 1, 1992 to June 30, 1995 graduates from the Center for the Advancement of Education. As planned, the invited sample was to consist of 25 percent of all graduates:

25% * 1319 7/1/92 to 6/30/93 Graduates N =	330
25% * 1229 7/1/93 to 6/30/94 Graduates N =	307
25% * 1305 7/1/94 to 6/30/95 Graduates N =	326
	963

Selection into the invited sample was based on the generation of mailing labels, using *last name* for the sorting process. However, incomplete mailing labels were evident for 14 graduates in the invited sample. Due to potential problems with survey return from international graduates, it was decided to decline survey distribution to the seven graduates in the invited sample with a mailing label indicating an international address. Accordingly, the adjusted invited sample consisted of 942 July 1, 1992 to June 30, 1995 graduates.

During the data collection period (April 15, 1996 to May 15, 1996), the United States Postal Service returned 97 surveys as undeliverable. Accordingly, the potential responding sample consisted of 845 July 1, 1992 to June 30, 1995 graduates. Surveys were returned by 255 graduates, resulting in a survey response rate of 30.2 percent.

Sample statistics are in parity with population parameters on known demographic criteria, such as Florida residence, gender, or ethnicity (*Nova Southeastern University's Graduates: July 1, 1990 to June 30, 1994*, 1995; *Enrollment Trends and Characteristics of Nova Southeastern University's Students: Calendar Years 1990 to 1994*, 1995.) Accordingly, there is sufficient evidence to suggest that the responding sample is representative of the population.

RESULTS

Section I: Background Information

Survey response by academic program is presented in Table 1. Statistics related to the demographic composition of the responding sample are presented in Tables 2 to 10. Key findings include the following:

- The M.S./Ed.S. Graduate Teacher Education Program is the largest program in the Center, and this program represented nearly 40 percent of the responding sample (Table 1).

- Nearly 75 percent of all respondents were female (Table 2).

- Minorities represented approximately 25 percent of all survey respondents (Table 3).

- Respondents tend to be quite stable in terms of permanent residence. Approximately 25 percent of all respondents resided in South Florida at time of graduation, 25 percent in other parts of Florida, and 50 percent in other states and nations (Table 4). Equally, approximately 25 percent of all respondents currently reside in South Florida, 25 percent in other parts of Florida, and 50 percent in other states and nations (Table 5).

- Survey response ranged from 29.4 percent for 1992/1993 graduates to 34.1 percent for 1993/1994 graduates (Table 6).

- Respondents indicated wide geographic dispersement in place of class attendance, with approximately 30 percent of all class attendance in South Florida, 30 percent in other parts of Florida, and 40 percent in other states and nations (Table 7).

Survey participants were also provided with a series of statements that related to satisfaction and reasons for attending the University. Table 11 demonstrates that less than 8 percent of all respondents indicated that they would be unwilling to attend the University if they were to pursue another degree.

Table 12 repeats the question **Why did you decide to attend NSU?**, which was previously presented to graduates of the University's undergraduate programs (*Graduates of Nova Southeastern University's Undergraduate Programs Tell Us What They Think about Their University Experience,* (1996). In general parity to the results of the graduates from the University's undergraduate programs, respondents from the Center for the Advancement of Education indicated that the three most frequently stated reasons for attending the University were:

- Convenience . . . . . 88.6 percent indicated Yes

- Type of programs available . . . . . 65.9 percent indicated Yes

- Location . . . . . 54.5 percent indicated Yes

Table 13 presents reaction to the question **What would you have done if you had not attended Nova Southeastern University?** Nearly 50 percent of all respondents indicated that they would attend a state university in either South Florida or some other area in the

United States. Nearly 15 percent of all respondents indicated that they would not have attended a college or university if they had not attended Nova Southeastern University.

Respondents were also asked to react to the question **Would you recommend your program to a friend or acquaintance who asked your opinion?** As presented in Table 14, less than 2 percent of all respondents marked "No" for this question.

Section II: Outcomes

Section II of the survey provided a series of statements related to selected outcomes. Over 72 percent of these statements (Tables 15A and 15B) received a mean rating of 4.0 or greater. Reflecting the practitioner orientation of the Center for the Advancement of Education, it is interesting to note that the statement **Acquiring knowledge and skills needed for a career** received the highest mean rating of all statements in this section, with survey respondents offering a mean of 4.5 for this statement.

Section III: Quality Indicators

Table 16 provides a summary of statements related to quality indicators. It should be recalled that these statements were obtained by careful review of accreditation criteria established by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (*Criteria for Accreditation*, 1996).

The highest mean ratings (Mean = 4.3) were offered for **Clarity of written graduate admission policies**, **Program length**, and **Correctness of student records (including transcripts)**. When reviewing Table 16, it is cautioned that the responding N should be given careful attention. Nearly all respondents offered a numerical response to statements such as **Program length** (N = 246) and **Instructional methods** (N = 247). However, respondents did not perceive the same level of need to respond to other statements, such as **Student government opportunities** (N = 108) and **Health services** (N = 92).

Section IV: Computing

Again, in similarity to results obtained from *Graduates of Nova Southeastern University's Undergraduate Programs Tell Us What They Think about Their University Experience* (1996), respondents from the Center for the Advancement of Education indicated that their greatest strength in computing was in **Ability to use word processing software**, which received a mean rating of 4.0 (Table 17). The lowest ratings for the 12 statements related to computing

included **Ability to use spreadsheet software** (Mean = 2.9) and **Ability to use the Internet** (**Mean = 2.9**).

Section V: Employment and Career

Tables 18 to 23 present a summary of responses to statements relating to employment and career. **Acquiring new information** (Mean = 4.3) received the highest responses for all statements in Table 18. Respondents offered a mean rating of 4.1 to the statement **Increased professional status**. The statement **Preparation for future study** received a mean rating of 4.0. Respondents indicated a mean of 13.4 years of professional work experience before enrolling at the University.

Respondents were also given the opportunity to compare the relationship of their current job to their academic program at the University (Table 19). Over 66 percent of all respondents indicated that their current job was **Highly related** to their academic program at the University. As further validation of the practitioner orientation of the Center's programs, over 80 percent of all respondents indicated that their university experiences prepared them for their current job either **Exceptionally well**, **More than adequately**, or **Adequately** (Table 20).

The range of respondent salaries is presented in Table 21. Over 25 percent of all respondents indicated that their annual salary from their primary employer was between $30,000 to $39,999. Approximately 20 percent of all respondents indicated that their salary was between $40,000 to $49,999.

Respondents were also asked to react to questions about enrollment in graduate or professional programs since graduation from the University. Approximately 10 percent of these recent graduates have applied (Table 22) and enrolled (Table 23) in additional graduate or professional studies.

Table 1

Academic Program

PROGRAM	RESPONDENTS	
	N	% TOTAL
Doctoral		
National Ed.D. Program for Educational Leaders	53	20.8
Ed.D. Programs in Child and Youth Studies	39	15.3
Ed.D. Programs for Higher Education	20	7.8
Sub-Total	112	43.9
Master's/Educational Specialist		
Graduate Teacher Education Program	101	39.6
Speech-Language Pathology	16	6.3
Life Span Care and Administration	17	6.7
Sub Total	134	52.6
Unidentified	9	3.5
Total	255	

Table 2

Gender

GENDER	RESPONDENTS	
	N	% TOTAL
Female	187	73.3
Male	63	24.7
Unidentified	5	2.0
Total	255	

Table 3

Ethnicity

Ethnicity	Respondents	
	N	% Total
African-American	38	14.9
American Indian or Alaskan Native	1	0.4
Asian or Pacific Islander	0	—
Hispanic	18	7.1
White	192	75.3
Other or Unidentified	6	2.4
Total	255	

Table 4

Place of Permanent Residence at Time of Graduation

Place of Permanent Residence at Time of Graduation	Respondents	
	N	% Total
Broward, Dade, Monroe, or Palm Beach County	63	24.7
Another Florida County	73	28.6
Another State	110	43.1
Another Country	7	2.7
Unidentified	2	0.8
Total	255	

Table 5

Place of Permanent Residence Now

Place of Permanent Residence Now	Respondents	
	N	% Total
Broward, Dade, Monroe, or Palm Beach County	58	22.7
Another Florida County	72	28.2
Another State	116	45.5
Another Country	7	2.7
Unidentified	2	0.8
Total	255	

Table 6

Year of Graduation

Year of Graduation	Respondents	
	N	% Total
July 1, 1992, to June 30, 1993	75	29.4
July 1, 1993, to June 30, 1994	87	34.1
July 1, 1994, to June 30, 1995	85	33.3
Unidentified	8	3.1
Total	255	

Table 7

Place of Attendance of the Majority of Classes

Place of Attendance	Respondents	
	N	% Total
Davie Campus or East Campus	46	18.0
Cluster Location in Broward, Dade, or Palm Beach County	24	9.4
Cluster Location in Another Florida County	74	29.0
Cluster Location in Another State	100	39.2
Cluster Location in Another Country	3	1.2
Unidentified	8	3.1
Total	255	

Table 8

Highest Degree Now Held

Highest Degree	Respondents	
	N	% Total
Master's	109	42.7
Master's plus 15 or more graduate credits	24	9.4
Specialist	15	5.9
Professional Degree	1	0.4
Doctoral	104	40.8
Unidentified	2	0.8
Total	255	

Table 9

Primary Enrollment Status

Enrollment Status	Respondents	
	N	% Total
Full-Time Student	145	56.9
Part-Time Student	102	40.0
Unidentified	8	3.1
Total	255	

Table 10

Years of Attendance at Nova Southeastern University

Years Attended					
Years	N	%	Years	N	%
1 Year	32	12.5	5 Years	16	6.3
2 Years	69	27.1	6 Years	3	1.2
3 Years	79	31.0	7 or More Years	5	2.0
4 Years	45	17.6	Unidentified	6	2.4
			Total	255	

Table 11

Frequency of Response to the Question: "If you were to pursue another degree, would you attend Nova Southeastern University in the future?"

Response	Respondents	
	N	% Total
Yes	126	49.4
No	20	7.8
Undecided	72	28.2
Not Applicable	30	11.8
Unidentified	7	2.7
Total	255	

Table 12

Frequency of Response to the Question: "Why did you decide to attend NSU?"

Response	Respondents	
	N	% Yes
Academic reputation	89	34.9
Admissions standards	73	28.6
Advice of counselors and teachers	41	16.1
Availability of scholarships or financial aid	29	11.4
Convenience	226	88.6
Cost	20	7.8
Location	139	54.5
Small class size	66	25.9
Social atmosphere	28	11.0
Type of programs available	168	65.9
Other	35	13.7

Table 13

Frequency of Response to the Question: "What would you have done if you had not attended Nova Southeastern University?"

Response	Respondents	
	N	% Yes
Attended another private college or university in South Florida	27	10.6
Attended another private college or university in Florida, but not in South Florida	7	2.7
Attended a private college or university in another state	21	8.2
Attended a state college or university in South Florida	42	16.5
Attended a state college or university in Florida, but not in South Florida	30	11.8
Attended a state college or university in another state	53	20.8
Not attended a college or university	37	14.5
Other	13	5.1
Unidentified	25	9.8
Total	255	

Table 14

Frequency of Response to the Question: "Would you recommend your program to a friend or acquaintance who asked your opinion?"

Response	Respondents	
	N	% Total
Yes, without reservation	181	71.0
Yes, with some reservations	63	24.7
No	4	1.6
Unidentified	7	2.7
Total	255	

Table 15A

Ratings of Selected Statements Related to Outcomes: Part A

STATEMENT	N	MODE	MEDIAN	MEAN	SD
NSU has helped me meet my educational goals . . .	250	5	4	4.2	1.1
If choosing a college again, I would choose NSU . .	234	4	4	3.9	1.1
My experiences at NSU have prepared me to deal with possible career changes	229	4	4	3.9	1.2
I would recommend NSU to others	249	5	4	4.1	1.1
My experiences at NSU have helped motivate me grow in my professional life	250	5	4	4.1	1.1
NSU welcomes and uses feedback from students to improve the University	221	4	4	3.6	1.2
I was promoted due to receiving my degree from NSU	173	5	3	3.0	1.5
I received a salary increase after completing this degree program	220	5	4	3.9	1.5

RATING KEY

1	Strongly Disagree	4	Agree
2	Disagree	5	Strongly Agree
3	Neutral, Neither Agree nor Disagree	NA	Not Applicable
		U	Unknown or Unable to Answer

Table 15B

Ratings of Selected Statements Related to Outcomes: Part B

STATEMENT	N	MODE	MEDIAN	MEAN	SD
Acquiring knowledge and skills needed for a career	241	5	4	4.5	0.6
Becoming competent in my field	239	4	4	4.4	0.7
Developing problem-solving skills	243	4	4	4.3	0.7
Improving my quantitative ability	236	4	4	4.1	0.8
Improving my leadership skills	243	5	4	4.3	0.7
Increasing my professional productivity	238	5	4	4.3	0.7
Learning to formulate and reshape my lifetime goals	238	4	4	4.1	0.8
Improving my interpersonal skills	237	4	4	4.0	0.8
Improving my oral communication skills	239	4	4	4.0	0.8
Improving my written communication skills	242	5	4	4.3	0.8

RATING KEY

1	Very Negative Impact	5	Very Positive Impact
2	Moderately Negative Impact	NA	Not Applicable
3	No Impact	U	Unknown or Unable to Answer
4	Moderately Positive Impact		

Table 16

Ratings of Selected Statements Related to Quality Indicators

STATEMENT	N	MODE	MEDIAN	MEAN	SD
Clarity of written graduate admission policies	242	4	4	4.3	0.8
Clarity of written graduate completion requirements	247	4	4	4.1	1.0
Clarity of written curricular offerings, as identified in program catalog	243	4	4	4.2	0.8
Program length	246	4	4	4.3	0.8
Instructional methods	247	4	4	4.0	0.9
Delivery system	243	4	4	4.2	0.9
Published grading policy	242	4	4	4.1	0.9
Process for assigning students to advisors	226	4	4	3.5	1.2
Quality of advising	234	4	4	3.7	1.2
Clarity of program catalog	241	4	4	4.1	0.8
Correctness of student records (including transcripts)	243	5	4	4.3	0.8
Availability of library and learning resource materials	222	5	4	3.7	1.2
Adequacy of library and learning resource materials	221	4	4	3.6	1.2
Orientation program relative to library services	205	3	4	3.6	1.1
Access to information through technology	222	4	4	3.7	1.0
Instructional support services (e.g., educational equipment and specialized facilities such as laboratories, audio visual and duplicating services)	189	3	3	3.3	1.1
Infusion of information technology into the curricula	212	4	4	3.6	1.1
Provisions for training in the use of technology	213	4	3	3.4	1.1
Student development services	165	3	3	3.4	1.0
Counseling and career development	158	3	3	3.2	1.1
Student government opportunities	108	3	3	3.2	1.0
Student behavior policies and procedures	144	3	4	3.6	0.9

Table 16 (Continued)

Ratings of Selected Statements Related to Quality Indicators

STATEMENT	N	MODE	MEDIAN	MEAN	SD
Financial aid services	179	4	4	3.7	1.1
Health services	92	3	3	3.4	0.9
Alumni affairs	194	3	4	3.7	0.8
Refund policies when withdrawing from courses	106	3	4	3.7	0.9
Adequacy of physical resources in classrooms	194	4	4	3.6	1.1
Safety and security of classroom buildings and the learning environment	201	4	4	3.9	0.9

RATING KEY

1	Very Dissatisfied	4	Satisfied
2	Dissatisfied	5	Very Satisfied
3	Neutral, Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	NA	Not Applicable
		U	Unknown or Unable to Answer

Table 17

Ratings of Selected Statements Relating to Computing

STATEMENT	N	MODE	MEDIAN	MEAN	SD
Ability to use an operating system	210	3	3	3.4	1.0
Ability to use computing equipment for problem solving	210	3	3	3.3	1.1
Ability to use database software	212	3	3	3.3	1.1
Ability to use electronic mail	205	3	3	3.3	1.3
Ability to use graphics software	210	3	3	3.0	1.2
Ability to use hardware	218	3	3	3.4	1.1
Ability to use multimedia hardware and software	216	3	3	3.1	1.1
Ability to use spreadsheet software	210	3	3	2.9	1.2
Ability to use the Internet	202	3	3	2.9	1.3
Ability to use word processing software	217	5	4	4.0	1.1
Awareness of legal and ethical use of computing equipment	212	3	4	3.5	1.2
Knowledge of computing technology in an information society	218	4	4	3.5	1.1

RATING KEY

1	No Skills	4	Very Skilled
2	Few Skills	5	Exceptionally Skilled
3	Moderate Skills	NA	Not Applicable
		U	Unknown or Unable to Answer

Table 18

Ratings of Selected Statements Relating to Employment and Career

STATEMENT	N	MODE	MEDIAN	MEAN	SD
Professional Development					
Increased opportunity for promotion	230	5	4	3.8	1.3
Increased opportunity for consulting	218	5	4	3.5	1.4
Acquired new information	242	5	4	4.3	0.9
Financial gain	239	5	4	3.7	1.3
Increased professional status	240	5	4	4.1	1.1
Social growth and contribution (working as a team member)	239	4	4	3.9	1.1
Preparation for future study	221	5	4	4.0	1.1
Years of Professional Work Experience Before Enrolling at NSU	255	20	13	13.4	8.8

RATING KEY				
1	2	3	4	5
Not at all				Substantially

Table 19

Relationship of Current Job to Academic Program at NSU

Level of Relationship	Respondents	
	N	% Total
Highly related	169	66.3
Moderately related	52	20.4
Slightly related	19	7.5
Not at all related	7	2.7
I am currently unemployed	2	0.8
Unknown or unable to answer	6	2.4
Total	255	

Table 20

Level of Preparation for Current Job Provided by Experiences at NSU

Level of Preparation	Respondents	
	N	% Total
Exceptionally well	59	23.1
More than adequately	78	30.6
Adequately	77	30.2
Less than adequately	10	3.9
Very poorly	1	0.4
Not at all	11	4.3
I am currently unemployed	2	0.8
Unknown or unable to answer	17	6.6
Total	255	

Table 21

Annual Salary from Primary Employer

Salary Range	Respondents	
	N	% Total
$29,999 or less	36	14.1
$30,000 to $39,999	73	28.6
$40,000 to $49,999	53	20.8
$50,000 to $59,999	33	12.9
$60,000 to $69,999	29	11.4
$70,000 to $79,999	6	2.4
$80,000 to $89,999	8	3.1
$90,000 or more	6	2.4
Unemployed, looking for work	0	0.0
Unemployed, student	0	0.0
Unemployed, other	0	0.0

Table 22

Frequency of Response to the Question: "Have you applied to a graduate or professional program since graduating from NSU?"

Response	Respondents	
	N	% Total
Yes	23	9.0
No	191	74.9
Not Applicable	29	11.4
Unidentified	12	4.7
Total	255	

Table 23

Frequency of Response to the Question: "Have you enrolled in a graduate or professional program since graduating from NSU?"

Response	Respondents	
	N	% Total
Yes	24	9.4
No	192	75.3
Not Applicable	28	11.0
Unidentified	11	4.3
Total	255	

SUMMARY

As evidenced in *Status Report on Institutional Effectiveness: 1994 - 1995* (1995, p.3), distance education and a practitioner orientation are central to the structure and format of the Center for the Advancement of Education. Attention to this focused mission has contributed to the Center's growth during the last quarter-century. Based on unduplicated, cumulative headcount enrollment, the Center for the Advancement of Education was the University's largest academic center in Fiscal Year 1995, serving 6,597 students between July 1, 1994 and June 30, 1995. To place this statistic in context, enrollment in the Center represented 32 percent of all University headcount enrollment during this time period (*Research and Planning Weekly Enrollment Report*, July 3, 1995).

The tables presented in this report provided evidence that graduates were overall very pleased with their experience at the University:

- Over 70 percent of all respondents indicated that, without reservation, they would recommend their program to a friend or acquaintance.
- Over two-thirds of all respondents indicated that their academic program was highly related to their current job.
- The outcome statement receiving the highest mean rating (Mean = 4.5) focused on the impact the Center had on **Acquiring knowledge and skills needed for a career.**

Recommendations

This study was initiated to offer a center-wide assessment of recent graduates of the Center for the Advancement of Education. In that regard, this report should help meet the decision-making needs of the Center's faculty and administrative staff.

However, it should also be recalled that distance education is a pervasive activity in the Center. Clusters and sites in the Fort Lauderdale area are structured along the same distance education format as peer clusters and sites in other areas. Accordingly, this study also serves as an assessment of distance education in the University's largest academic center. In that regard, this report should offer guidance on distance education and how this practice can be used to meet the University's goals and mission.

Demographics

Over 70 percent of all graduates are female; nearly 25 percent of all graduates are members of a minority group; and graduates are approximately 40 years old at time of graduation. It is critical that marketing literature, program catalogs, and similar materials offer an accurate image of the Center's unique student body.

Permanent Residence and Place of Class Attendance

This study confirmed statistics previously reported in *Permanent Residence of Nova Southeastern University Students: End of Fall Term 1994* (1995) and *Place of Class Attendance at Nova Southeastern University: Calendar Years 1990 to 1994* (1995) regarding the dominance of distance education activities in the Center. Marketing literature and all other documents used to educate external constituencies about the Center should clearly emphasize the wide geographic dispersement of the Center.

Comparative Advantage

The survey associated with this study was purposely designed to elicit information that would support the Center's marketing and recruitment activities. Responses such as **Convenience** (88.6 percent response Yes), **Type of programs available** (65.9 percent response Yes), and **Location** (54.5 percent response Yes) should be incorporated into the appropriate publications.

Although this report offered a collapsed analysis of recent graduates from the Center for the Advancement of Education, it would benefit the Center to consider responses to the question **What would you have done if you had not attended Nova Southeastern University?** at the

program level. Tables providing breakouts by academic program for all six programs in the Center have been prepared. These tables have been provided to the appropriate administrative staff, and they are also available on request.

Academic Outcomes

Respondents offered very favorable ratings to survey statements relating to professional development and career preparation. To offer context to this area, it must be recalled that respondents are adults with considerable professional experience (Mean = 13.4 years) prior to enrollment at the University.

It was surprising, however, to see a neutral rating to the statement **I was promoted due to receiving my degree from NSU** (Mean = 3.0). Although the population for this study consisted of recent graduates, it was anticipated that this statement would show more immediate career advancement after completion of a graduate degree. Accordingly, an assessment of career mobility from a representative sample of graduates would greatly enhance a better understanding of the social, economic, and professional benefits of matriculation through the graduate programs offered by the Center for the Advancement of Education.

Quality Indicators

As previously mentioned, statements related to quality indicators were purposely linked to accreditation criteria established in *Criteria for Accreditation* (1996). Respondents generally offered favorable ratings to statements that focused on academic issues. However, to aim for continuous improvement, faculty and administrative staff may find it useful to focus attention on quality indicators that had summative mean ratings of 4.0 or less, including the following in rank order:

- Mean = 3.2 Counseling and career development
- Mean = 3.2 Student government opportunities
- Mean = 3.3 Instructional support services
- Mean = 3.4 Provisions for training in the use of technology
- Mean = 3.4 Student development services
- Mean = 3.4 Health services
- Mean = 3.5 Process for assigning students to advisors
- Mean = 3.6 Adequacy of library and learning resource materials

- Mean = 3.6 Orientation program relative to library services
- Mean = 3.6 Infusion of information technology into the curricula
- Mean = 3.6 Student behavior policies and procedures
- Mean = 3.6 Adequacy of physical resources in classrooms
- Mean = 3.7 Quality of advising
- Mean = 3.7 Availability of library and learning resource materials
- Mean = 3.7 Access to information through technology
- Mean = 3.7 Financial aid services
- Mean = 3.7 Alumni affairs
- Mean = 3.7 Refund policies when withdrawing from courses
- Mean = 3.9 Safety and security of classroom buildings and the learning environment

However, it must be cautioned that attention to these quality indicators should be balanced by equally giving attention to the unique composition of students in the Center. Counseling, career guidance, student government, and health services may not be too critically important for adult students in a practitioner's program. Some type of assessment of the perceived importance of these quality indicators may be helpful to offer balance to the efficacy of these criteria.

Computing

Although the University has developed an extensive computing infrastructure, respondents indicated that they have only moderate levels of skills in the basic use of computers. Since technology will become an ever increasing tool for all professionals, more complete infusion of technology into the curriculum is a rather obvious need and has been addressed with some intensity, including large expenditures of funds over the past five years. Moreover, this issue was a major component of the recently completed *Master Plan* (1995).

Career Patterns

This study offered evidence that respondents are very successful in career advancement and that the Center's academic programs are highly related to the professional employment and advancement of graduates. These success indicators should be reviewed by the faculty to offer guidance on curricular development in the Center's practitioner-oriented programs. These success indicators should also be reviewed by administrators and marketing personnel in order to evaluate their potential utility in marketing and recruitment efforts.

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Nova Southeastern University

Appendix

SURVEY OF GRADUATES OF THE

ABRAHAM S. FISCHLER CENTER FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF EDUCATION

SECTION I: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Academic Program at NSU (mark one):

DOCTORAL:

____ National Ed.D. Program for Educational Leaders
____ Ed.D. Programs for Higher Education
____ Ed.D. Programs in Child and Youth Studies

MASTER'S/EDUCATIONAL SPECIALIST:

____ Graduate Teacher Education Program
____ Speech-Language Pathology
____ Life Span Care and Administration

Gender

____ Female
____ Male

Age at time of graduation: ____ Years

Ethnic Group

____ African-American
____ American Indian or Alaskan Native
____ Asian or Pacific Islander
____ Hispanic
____ White
____ Other or Unknown

Place of permanent residence at time of graduation

____ Broward, Dade, Monroe, or Palm Beach County
____ Another Florida County
____ Another State
____ Another Country

Place of permanent residence now

____ Broward, Dade, Monroe, or Palm Beach County
____ Another Florida County
____ Another State
____ Another Country

Year of graduation from NSU

____ July 1, 1992, to June 30, 1993
____ July 1, 1993, to June 30, 1994
____ July 1, 1994, to June 30, 1995

Where did you attend the majority of your classes?

____ Davie Campus or East Campus
____ Cluster Location in Broward, Dade, or Palm Beach County
____ Cluster Location in Another Florida County
____ Cluster Location in Another State
____ Cluster Location in Another Country

What is the highest degree you now hold?

____ Master's
____ Master's plus 15 or more graduate credits
____ Specialist
____ Professional Degree
____ Doctoral

What was your primary enrollment status at NSU?

____ Full-Time Student
____ Part-Time Student

How many years did you attend NSU?

____ 1 Year
____ 2 Years
____ 3 Years
____ 4 Years
____ 5 Years
____ 6 Years
____ 7 or More Years

If you were to pursue another degree, would you attend NSU in the future?

____ Yes
____ No
____ Undecided
____ Not Applicable

Why did you decide to attend NSU? Check all selections that apply.

____ Academic reputation
____ Admissions standards
____ Advice of counselors and teachers
____ Availability of scholarships or financial aid
____ Convenience
____ Cost

___ Location
___ Small class size
___ Social atmosphere
___ Type of programs available
___ Other _____

What would you have done if you had not attended NSU? Would you have attended:

___ Another private college or university in South Florida
___ Another private college or university in Florida, but not in South Florida
___ A private college or university in another state
___ A state college or university in South Florida
___ A state college or university in Florida, but not in South Florida
___ A state college or university in another state
___ Not attended a college or university
___ Other _____

Would you recommend your program to a friend or acquaintance who asked your opinion?

___ Yes, without reservation
___ Yes, with some reservations (explain)

_____

___ No (explain)

_____

Section II: Outcomes

Please review the following rating key and then mark or circle to the left of each item your level of agreement with each statement:

Rating Key			
1	Strongly Disagree	4	Agree
2	Disagree	5	Strongly Agree
3	Neutral, Neither Agree nor Disagree	NA	Not Applicable
		U	Unknown or Unable to Answer

1 2 3 4 5 NA U NSU has helped me meet my educational goals.
1 2 3 4 5 NA U If choosing a college again, I would choose NSU.
1 2 3 4 5 NA U My experiences at NSU have prepared me to deal with possible career changes.
1 2 3 4 5 NA U I would recommend NSU to others.
1 2 3 4 5 NA U My experiences at NSU have helped motivate me grow in my professional life.
1 2 3 4 5 NA U NSU welcomes and uses feedback from students to improve the University.
1 2 3 4 5 NA U I was promoted due to receiving my degree from NSU.
1 2 3 4 5 NA U I received a salary increase after completing this degree program.

Please review the following rating key and then mark or circle to the left of each item how FCAE has made an impact on you, relative to each statement:

Rating Key			
1	Very Negative Impact	5	Very Positive Impact
2	Moderately Negative Impact	NA	Not Applicable
3	No Impact	U	Unknown or Unable to Answer
4	Moderately Positive Impact		

1 2 3 4 5 NA U Acquiring knowledge and skills needed for a career
1 2 3 4 5 NA U Becoming competent in my field
1 2 3 4 5 NA U Developing problem-solving skills
1 2 3 4 5 NA U Improving my quantitative ability
1 2 3 4 5 NA U Improving my leadership skills
1 2 3 4 5 NA U Increasing my professional productivity
1 2 3 4 5 NA U Learning to formulate and reshape my lifetime goals
1 2 3 4 5 NA U Improving my interpersonal skills
1 2 3 4 5 NA U Improving my oral communication skills
1 2 3 4 5 NA U Improving my written communication skills

Section III: Quality Indicators

Please review the following rating key and then mark or circle to the left of each item your level of satisfaction relative to each statement:

Rating Key			
1	Very Dissatisfied	4	Satisfied
2	Dissatisfied	5	Very Satisfied
3	Neutral, Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	NA	Not Applicable
		U	Unknown or Unable to Answer

1 2 3 4 5 NA U Clarity of written graduate admission policies
1 2 3 4 5 NA U Clarity of written graduate completion requirements
1 2 3 4 5 NA U Clarity of written curricular offerings, as identified in program catalog
1 2 3 4 5 NA U Program length
1 2 3 4 5 NA U Instructional methods
1 2 3 4 5 NA U Delivery system
1 2 3 4 5 NA U Published grading policy
1 2 3 4 5 NA U Process for assigning students to advisors
1 2 3 4 5 NA U Quality of advising
1 2 3 4 5 NA U Clarity of program catalog
1 2 3 4 5 NA U Correctness of student records (including transcripts)
1 2 3 4 5 NA U Availability of library and learning resource materials
1 2 3 4 5 NA U Adequacy of library and learning resource materials
1 2 3 4 5 NA U Orientation program relative to library services

1 2 3 4 5 NA U Access to information through technology
1 2 3 4 5 NA U Instructional support services (e.g., educational equipment and specialized facilities such as laboratories, audio visual and duplicating services)
1 2 3 4 5 NA U Infusion of information technology into the curricula
1 2 3 4 5 NA U Provisions for training in the use of technology
1 2 3 4 5 NA U Student development services
1 2 3 4 5 NA U Counseling and career development
1 2 3 4 5 NA U Student government opportunities
1 2 3 4 5 NA U Student behavior policies and procedures
1 2 3 4 5 NA U Financial aid services
1 2 3 4 5 NA U Health services
1 2 3 4 5 NA U Alumni affairs
1 2 3 4 5 NA U Refund policies when withdrawing from courses
1 2 3 4 5 NA U Adequacy of physical resources in classrooms
1 2 3 4 5 NA U Safety and security of classroom buildings and the learning environment

SECTION IV: COMPUTING

Please review the following rating key and then mark or circle to the left of each item your level of skill relative to each statement:

RATING KEY			
1	No Skills	4	Very Skilled
2	Few Skills	5	Exceptionally Skilled
3	Moderate Skills	NA	Not Applicable
		U	Unknown or Unable to Answer

1 2 3 4 5 NA U Ability to use an operating system
1 2 3 4 5 NA U Ability to use computing equipment for problem solving
1 2 3 4 5 NA U Ability to use database software
1 2 3 4 5 NA U Ability to use electronic mail
1 2 3 4 5 NA U Ability to use graphics software
1 2 3 4 5 NA U Ability to use hardware
1 2 3 4 5 NA U Ability to use multimedia hardware and software
1 2 3 4 5 NA U Ability to use spreadsheet software
1 2 3 4 5 NA U Ability to use the Internet
1 2 3 4 5 NA U Ability to use word processing software
1 2 3 4 5 NA U Awareness of legal and ethical use of computing equipment
1 2 3 4 5 NA U Knowledge of computing technology in an information society

SECTION V: EMPLOYMENT AND CAREER

Please evaluate how the following components of your professional development have changed as a result of your experience with the Fischler Center for the Advancement of Education:

RATING KEY				
1	2	3	4	5
Not at all				Substantially

1 2 3 4 5 NA U Increased opportunity for promotion
1 2 3 4 5 NA U Increased opportunity for consulting
1 2 3 4 5 NA U Acquired new information
1 2 3 4 5 NA U Financial gain
1 2 3 4 5 NA U Increased professional status
1 2 3 4 5 NA U Social growth and contribution (working as a team member)
1 2 3 4 5 NA U Preparation for future study

How many years of professional work experience did you have before you enrolled at NSU: _____ Years

How closely related is your current job to your academic program at NSU?

____ Highly related
____ Moderately related
____ Slightly related
____ Not at all related
____ I am currently unemployed
____ Unknown or unable to answer

How well did your experiences at NSU prepare you for your current job?

____ Exceptionally well
____ More than adequately
____ Adequately
____ Less than adequately
____ Very poorly
____ Not at all
____ I am currently unemployed
____ Unknown or unable to answer

What is your annual salary from your primary employer?

____ $29,999 or less
____ $30,000 to $39,999
____ $40,000 to $49,999
____ $50,000 to $59,999
____ $60,000 to $69,999
____ $70,000 to $79,999
____ $80,000 to $89,999
____ $90,000 or more
____ Unemployed, looking for work
____ Unemployed, student
____ Unemployed, other

_____

Name of Current Employer

Have you applied to a graduate or professional program since graduating from NSU?

____ Yes
____ No
____ Not Applicable

Have you enrolled in a graduate or professional program since graduating from NSU?

____ Yes
____ No
____ Not Applicable

SECTION VI: COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS

Thank you for responding to this survey. Please use the space provided below, or use a separate sheet, to offer comments on your experiences at NSU and suggestions that may help the University provide an improved educational experience for future students.

Name (optional) _____

To offer a rich sense of how the University's graduates feel about their experience at NSU, we very much wish to add a full transcript of your comments to the final report. Although anonymity will be provided to those providing comments, we cannot include unsigned statements.

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